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When's the Best Time to Buy?

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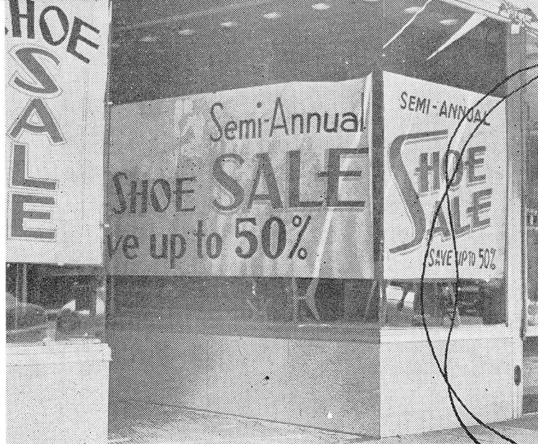


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When's The Best Time to

BUY?

by Phyllis Alvord Presler

Wise buying at sales can mean a net saving on the items you buy. Unwise sale buying may net you nothing. Sound seasonal and sale buying involves looking at the transaction from the standpoint of both buyer and seller.

KEEP AN EYE on the market. It can save you money—if you know *when* and *how* to take advantage of seasonal or special sale buying. Here are the reasons why products may be priced lower at some times of the year than others:

- Seasonal supply is greater than at other times.
- Product is perishable and must move quickly.
- Storage facilities aren't sufficient, and product must move.
- Fashion cycle is changing.
- Old stocks of appliances, home furnishings or clothing must be moved to make room for new merchandise.
- Shift between seasons.

There are other reasons which vary locally. The stimulation sale (anniversary, weekend, dollar-day, pre-season) occurs when business is slow. It may be store-wide, or only a limited number of items may be featured. The clearance sale may make way for new styles in clothing, new models or styles in home furnishing or equipment lines. Month-end, post-season, liquidation, seasonal clearance sales and sales of shopworn or damaged goods come in this class.

Wise seasonal and sale buying

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involves looking at the transaction from both your viewpoint and the seller's:

You want (a) good merchandise at a reasonable price and (b) merchandise which meets a need; there's no point in buying something for which you don't have a need or aren't certain that you'll have a need.

The retailer desires to (a) have you buy more goods than you might otherwise purchase; (b) move shopworn, out-of-date, discontinued, broken-lot or slow-moving merchandise; (c) stimulate buying during a slack season; (d) attract new customers; (e) introduce new goods or (f) develop good will.

Goods offered on sale usually come in two main categories—merchandise regularly carried in stock and special-purchase items. Regular merchandise usually is sold in clearance or "overstocked" sales or in broken-lot or broken-size sales and in sales of goods going out of style. Special-purchase merchandise usually is brought in for anniversary, dollar-day, sample-goods sales, etc. Regularly stocked goods may be offered for sale because they've been in stock for some time, have deteriorated in quality, have been used for demonstration or display or because they're fashion goods moving out of style. Special-purchase merchandise may be "seconds," "irregulars," defective in some way or discontinued or overstocked goods from a supplier. Or the merchandise may simply be

goods not quite up to the store's usual standards.

Watch that Price: Prices of goods on sale vary considerably. They may have been marked up before the sale to appear to have been reduced. Or they may actually be marked up, be the same price or genuinely less than the regular price. A careful shopper who knows the regular stock and prices can do a better job of recognizing a saving than one who doesn't. The general trend is that clearance sales offer the largest savings; special-purchase, next largest; and annual or stimulation sales, the least.

FOOD BUYING CALENDAR*

Frozen Foods

Corn, Aug., Sept.
Cherries, June, July
Grapefruit juice, Jan., Feb., Mar.
Orange juice, Jan., Feb., Mar.
Strawberries, June, July, Aug.

Fresh Fruits

Apples, Oct., Nov., Dec.
Bananas, Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May
Grapes, Aug., Sept.
Grapefruit, Feb., Mar.
Oranges, Jan., Feb., Mar.
Peaches, Aug.
Strawberries, May, June
Watermelon, July, Aug.

Fresh Vegetables

Asparagus, May, June
Cabbage, Sept., Oct., Nov.
Carrots, Feb., Mar., Apr.
Celery, Sept. through Apr.
Green beans, Aug., Sept.
Green onions, Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
Lettuce, Feb., Mar., Apr.
Potatoes, Oct., Nov., Dec.
Tomatoes, Aug., Sept., Oct.

Meat

Beef (higher grade), May, June, July
Beef (lower grade), Oct., Nov.
Fryers, hens, turkeys, May through Oct.
Lamb, Oct., Nov., Dec.
Pork, Nov. through Apr.

*These are the times when these foods generally are in good supply and prices are relatively low.

Your Approach: Whenever you buy, but particularly for sales, take your time to decide. For foods, begin with a flexible buying plan so you can substitute low-cost foods in good supply for higher-cost foods in shorter supply. Plan to use more of some foods when supply is largest and cost is

down; less when supply is short and cost up. Buy for home canning or freezing when prices are down.

For clothing, home furnishings and appliances, consider: What was the original price? Is this a bargain? If it needs cleaning or repair, at what cost? Is the pur-

chase necessary? Does it fit in with things you already have? Why was it marked down? Is it worth the price?

Consider the general trend in prices. If the trend is downward, sale buying may not be wise. If upward, savings may be substantial.

Kind of sale	Time of year	Sale goods	Savings
CLOTHING			
Inventory (Clearance)	Late December January July	Fall and winter coats, suits, dresses, casual and sports wear	As much as 50%; average around 25%
Seasonal (Clearance)	Before and after Christmas Before and after Easter After July 4	Coats Suits Dresses Casual and sportswear Shoes	Average 25%; may save up to 50%
End-of-the-month (Clearance)	Last of month, but not every month	Soiled items or stock that has been in store for some time	Average 25%; but up to 50%
Stimulation	August January	Fur trimmed coats Lingerie Night clothes	10-15% on regular stock 15-20% on special purchase
Odd sizes (Clearance)	August	Dresses Coats Shoes	Average 25%; as much as 50%
Dollar days (Stimulation and/or special purchase)	Summer	Most items in stock, but may not include large ones like coats, suits and dresses	10-15% on regular stock 15-20% on special purchase
HOME FURNISHINGS			
White goods	January July	Bedding Towels Linens	Vary
Furniture	February August	Pieces that have been on display, a little soiled	As much as 50%
		Discontinued lines	Vary
		Furniture in warehouse to make room for new merchandise	10%; sometimes as much as 25%
Curtain and drapery fabrics	At various times during the year	Fabrics purchased for special sellings	Usually 10% to 20%; sometimes more
		Soiled goods Discontinued patterns	Sometimes marked down several times before sold—read tag. 10% to 15%
Floor coverings	Not definite	Discontinued coverings Samples Remnants	Vary
EQUIPMENT			
Clearance or End-of-month	Last of month—limited number of items	Electric housewares, lamps and small appliances	5-10%
Seasonal Inventory reduction	December, November Fall, spring	Mixers—high styled appliances	Often none; sometimes an extra accessory
Obsolete styles Damaged or repossessed	August, February, April Any time	Anything in household equipment	20-30% on obsolete styles Questionable for damaged or repossessed appliances
Special purchase	Slack seasons: unpredictable, dependent on weather and business conditions	Ranges, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, fans, irons, washers, dryers	10-15% on regular stock 15-20% on unknown or unlabeled brand goods
Stimulation: Out of season	Usually winter, but may be at other times	Power lawn mowers, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, for example	15-20%
Future delivery	Unpredictable slack seasons	Ranges, refrigerators, water heaters	10-20%; may be none if purchased with borrowed money requiring interest payments
Auctions	No specific time Dependent on close-out sales	All household equipment items	10-40%; must know style and price comparisons. Also consider transportation and installation costs
Warehouse Held at locations outside of established business districts; often special purchases of manufacturers' surpluses	Weekends, nights and holidays	Major household equipment	Questionable—dependent on demand. Transportation and service charges might add 10-15% to standard price
Discount house	All year	All household equipment	Frequent markup is 10% over wholesale; major savings are on "fair-traded" items. Merchandise sales final; no returns. Buyer pays transportation, installation and service charges
Trade-in	All year	Refrigerators, ranges, freezers, water heaters, etc.	\$10-\$100—depending on dealer's overhead expenses, style, original cost of sale item, resale value and demand for the trade-in